



Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc.

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TESTIMONY TO THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY, JUDICIARY COMMITTEE Thursday, March 29, 2012

The Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc. (CACIWC) is pleased to submit testimony today *in opposition to SB 445 AN ACT CONCERNING LIABILITY FOR THE RECREATIONAL USE OF LANDS*.

CACIWC appreciates the Committee's decision to hold a public hearing today on this bill and recognizes the challenges facing the Committee in their attempts to provide an appropriate balance in legislating liability protection for owners of lands used for public recreation. During 2011, CACIWC submitted testimony that supported HB 6557 and its goal of harmonizing recreational liability protection to all of Connecticut's governmental entities. CACIWC was very pleased that these concepts became codified in PA 11-211.

As part of its mission, CACIWC works to support its member conservation and inland wetland commissions in their efforts to preserve important Connecticut habitats and help sustain the esthetic natural beauty of our great state. PA 11-211 supported municipal efforts to acquire and manage forest lands and other open space parcels and to establish and maintain trail systems for bicycling, birding, hiking, and jogging. *By specifically targeting municipalities* and removing public beaches, boardwalks, and paved sidewalks from the definitions of land offered liability protection, SB 445 also targets many of the open space areas that are set aside by our member commissions for these purposes. CACIWC believes that the continuing efforts of these municipal agencies, commissions, and staff to preserve local open space parcels are crucial to sustaining Connecticut's natural habitats and resources, scenic landscapes, and fragile ecosystems. History has shown that the loss of these spaces, and the recreational opportunities that they provide, has been costly in terms of our economic, environmental, and human health. CACIWC, therefore, urges the Judiciary Committee to oppose SB 445 and instead maintain the recreational liability protection afforded to Connecticut's municipalities under PA 11-211.

CACIWC is a non-profit organization working to protect Connecticut's wetlands, watercourses, and other natural resources through support and education of the 2000+ volunteers and staff that carry out the responsibilities of Connecticut's Conservation Commissions and Inland Wetlands Commissions. CACIWC, representing over 200 member commissions, works with municipalities and environmental groups to promote public support for the judicious management and conservation of Connecticut's natural resources. For additional information contact Alan J. Siniscalchi, President at board@caciwc.org or visit www.caciwc.org.